

Identity Crisis

On my table sits a card, a gift from a Spanish friend of mine. It reads, 'Radical looking for a cause: I hate the music everyone likes because everyone likes it.' That is me—a rebel in the making.

As a child, I was so busy resisting others' beliefs that somehow, I lost my own along the way. While other girls fussed over long hair, I had mine boldly cut short; when *Twilight* dominated the literature shelves, I boldly proclaimed that I would never read it; when Korean pop culture took the world by storm, there I was, stubbornly engaging in Shostakovich composition. I must admit that there were times where I was tempted to switch over to the 'dark side', but my blind belief for individuality hindered me from doing so. For a long time, I foolishly felt proud of the loud originality I sought to achieve.

To my grandmother, however, it was profane to think like that. A woman immersed in superstition, hers was a life of avoiding black cats, keeping her hair long and praying in devout fervour before the altar. She was a woman of fierce pride, wearing her principles like an emblem across her chest. Conceit and arrogance was probably where our similarities ended. While she laid firm trust in her convictions, there I was, with boyish short hair, grappling with how to dissent the world's views. We lived in the same house, and yet, we were nothing like family.

Looking back, it may seem that I was trying my utmost best to stand out among a faceless crowd, and yet, the hot-blooded pursuit seemed to have been blind recklessness I could not untangle myself from.

When I began analysing certain matters pertaining to my life in more realistic terms, I realised that while I fought hard not to fade into the picture of generality, ironically, I began to lose what defined me as an individual. My beliefs began constituting of what others did not believe in, rather than what I upheld firmly. It was only then that I softened up to others' passions and interests, and when I truly let go of what I wrestled with, I became a much happier and less forced person.

Now, I come to see that despite of the superstitious beliefs my grandmother engaged herself in, truly, she was a much wiser person than I had ever been. She saw that clinging to her own principles proved more valuable than disputing others'. I may have been the more educated one, but definitely not wiser.

I remain firm that we are entitled to our own perceptions, that we should never be led by the nose regarding our convictions. However, I am forever altered in the way I will ever see the world. I came to see that we live not in an individualistic society, but an interrelated one where different perspectives inspire us, and also humble us. Life may be unfair, and yet, I believe, I belong to the better side of this imbalance. If people will not accept me for what I think, I move instead to offer them the grace of understanding.

To live, and let live, I want to possess the ability to see the concrete and the cement in the castles others build in the air.